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JM, XL

SUBJECT: JAMAICA: ELECTION CAMPAIGN ROUND-UP NUMBER THREE

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Summary and Analysis

1.(SBU) In this third round-up of election-related developments:

-- Opposition Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) issues ambitious Manifesto, including proposals for dramatic debt and deficit reductions;

-- A JLP government's foreign policy would focus on attracting investment and business, and would advocate a reorientation of CARICOM;

-- Latest poll shows parties in statistical dead heat;

-- Violent incidents continue to mar campaign;

-- OAS and CARICOM observers to monitor August 27 election;

-- Controversial USD 7.5 million cellular license returned to Government, Solutrea to leave Jamaica;

-- Local People's National Party (PNP) activist arrested on drug trafficking charges.

Analysis: The opposition JLP's slick media spots and polished, well-received Manifesto are no accident: the Party has been preparing for months, carefully building grassroots support at the local level. In contrast, the ruling PNP is dependent almost entirely on the personal charisma of Prime Minister (PM) Portia Simpson Miller (PSM). Thus far, the PNP's formidable public relations machine has resembled a Maserati running on four cylinders; but in coming weeks, it may accelerate to full throttle, making for the closest finish of any election Jamaica has seen in decades.

End Summary and Analysis.

JLP Issues Ambitious Manifesto

2.(SBU) The opposition Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) launched its 127-page "Manifesto 2007" at a function held at the Jamaica Conference Centre in Kingston on July 30. Across a wide spectrum of economic and social issues, the JLP Manifesto charts an ambitious course; its salient proposals include the following:

- Amendment of the constitution to replace the Queen with a Jamaican President who would be approved by two-thirds majorities of both Houses of Parliament;
- Complete independence for the Bank of Jamaica to set monetary policy and maintain price stability;
- On a phased basis within five years, a constitutional limit of public debt (currently 130 percent of GDP) to 95 percent of GDP; and a constitutional limit of the fiscal deficit (5.5 percent of GDP in 2006/07) to no more than 3 percent of GDP;
- Appointment of a Special Prosecutor to combat corruption;
- Imposition of two-term limit for prime ministers, and establishment of fixed election dates;
- Requirement for approval by two-thirds majorities in both Houses of Parliament of appointments to a number of sensitive posts, including Chief Justice, Director of Public Prosecutions, Contractor General, and Governor of the Bank of Jamaica;
- Legislation to regulate the financial operations of political parties;
- Criminal sanctions for abuses in the award of government contracts, legal protection for "whistleblowers" revealing government corruption, and modernization of libel and slander laws to facilitate exposures of wrongdoing.
- Redevelopment of historic Port Royal in Kingston Harbor as a duty-free tourist and cruise ship destination;

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- Establishment of an offshore financial sector based in Kingston;
- "Unrestricted, universal access" to national healthcare, to include dismantling the Regional Health Authorities;

((Note: the full text of the JLP Manifesto is on-line at:
<http://www.jlpteam.com/manifesto/docs>. Post will provide further analysis via septel.
 End Note.))

Foreign Policy: It's the Economy

3.(SBU) In the campaign to date, foreign policy considerations have been limited almost exclusively to JLP allegations of improper donations to the ruling People's National Party (PNP) by:

- the Dutch oil trading firm Trafigura (Reftel C); and
- Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez (Reftel D).

4.(SBU) JLP General Secretary and shadow spokesman for foreign policy Karl Samuda has told the media that a JLP government would not break diplomatic relations with Venezuela. Revealingly, the new JLP Manifesto includes foreign policy as a sub-topic under the chapter "Financial Management, Economic Development, and Growth," and states that: "our foreign policy approach must be to secure export markets and attract investors into our economy." A JLP government would merge Jamaica Trade and Invest (formerly JAMPRO), the Development Bank of Jamaica, and the Export/Import Bank to create one powerful mega-agency responsible for investment promotion and marketing. The Manifesto also says that a JLP Government will "press for the removal of domestic support of agricultural products by the European Union and the United States as a precondition for further liberalization of market access for such products."

JLP: CARICOM should reorient

5.(SBU) At the Manifesto's launch, Opposition Leader Bruce Golding

underscored that the JLP is not "anti-CARICOM...we are just anti-stagnation." The JLP believes CARICOM has been too inward looking: "All that we have done in CARICOM for 30 years is to redistribute poverty, and that was not the intention;" the focus should be on broadening markets to extend the region's reach.

A Virtual Dead Heat

6.(SBU) A Donald Anderson survey released August 2, based on data compiled July 19-23, gives the PNP 32.8 percent support and the JLP 29.3 percent, with the remainder either undecided or not intending to vote. According to this poll, over the last month support for the JLP has increased 3.7 percent, and for the PNP 2.1 percent.

Violent Incidents Continue to Mar Campaign

7.(SBU) Sporadic violence continues to mar the campaign, with unconfirmed charges and counter-charges that the various incidents - alleged strafing of motorcades, intimidation, assaults, murders, defacements of political billboards - have been politically motivated or staged. Both major parties accuse each other of failing to control their respective supporters. The PNP candidate for the volatile St. Elizabeth Southeast district, Norman Horne, has alleged that the JLP has imported thugs from the Tivoli Gardens area to intimidate PNP supporters; JLP candidate Frank Witter claims he has no knowledge of this.

8.(SBU) Prime Minister (PM) Portia Simpson Miller (PSM) has declared that she "has drawn the line," and will meet with the opposition JLP to discuss peace only if the talks are mediated by either the Church or Political Ombudsman Bishop Herro Blair; in response, Opposition Leader Bruce Golding has said: "If we are to unite the country, if we are to move forward as one nation, my job is to erase every line that is drawn."

9.(SBU) In an effort to reduce tensions, Political Ombudsman Blair has demanded that both parties remove their flags, posters, and graffiti - which in garrison communities often demarcate political turf - by August 4; compliance appears doubtful. A return to the orchestrated violence of the 1980 campaign, during which hundreds were killed, appears unlikely; however, whether either party can enforce compliance with the Ombudsman's demands, or prevent an

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escalation of random violent incidents, remains an open question.

OAS, CARICOM Observers

10.(SBU) Director of Elections Danville Walker has confirmed that observers from the OAS and CARICOM will monitor the August 27 election. He also has reiterated his confidence in the integrity of the electoral process, to include the secrecy of ballots. For its part, the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) has conducted exercises in preparing a "security blanket" to protect those polling stations deemed most at risk of violence.

Return of controversial cellular license:
Solutrea to leave Jamaica

11.(SBU) Solutrea Jamaica Ltd. will return the USD 7.5 million cellular telephone license it recently acquired from the controversial Minister of Industry, Technology, Energy, and Commerce Philip Paulwell, a close advisor and confidant of PSM. CEO Keith Walker announced the firm's withdrawal from Jamaica during a press briefing on August 31, explaining that: "unfortunately, the project has become the subject of much controversy, raising even questions regarding our corporate integrity and bona fides." Paulwell has been widely criticized for alleged mismanagement of Jamaica's Universal Access Fund (UAF, background Reftel E), and for other alleged skullduggery in office; the opposition JLP has portrayed his shady record as exemplifying the need for political housecleaning. A Ministerial Committee was set up to investigate the awarding of

the license to Solutrea, and subsequently has absolved Paulwell of wrongdoing; skeptics claim the Committee was more interested in minimizing the political fallout during the election than getting at the truth.

PNP Activist Indicted on Drug Trafficking Charges

12.(SBU) Prominent businessman and local-level Mt. Salem Division PNP councilor Errol Lamey has been arrested after 60 pounds of ganja were found in a container of lumber he had attempted to ship from Kingston. Lamey is the head of the community-based organization RELIEF (Restoring Enjoyable Living in Each Family). He has denied any wrongdoing, and PNP officials have made no comment to date.
JOHNSON